

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAN JO 04134 01 OF 02 231933Z

53

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 PC-04 DRC-01 /156 W

----- 067619

R 231750Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5598

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN JOSE 4134

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: SEVENTY-FIVE DAYS TO THE ELECTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE COSTA RICAN ELECTION PICTURE IS NOTABLE, AT THIS POINT, FOR WIDESPREAD VOTER DISINTEREST. NEVERTHELESS, AS THIS LARGE DISINTERESTED AND UNDECIDED BLOC IS LEGALLY OBLIGED TO VOTE IN FEBRUARY, IT WILL BE CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT TO THE LEADING CANDIDATES WHO, RELYING ON MACHINE VOTES ALONE, ARE NOT LIKELY TO REACH THE 40-PERCENT PLURALITY NECESSARY TO WIN THE PRESIDENCY ON THE FIRST BALLOT AND AVOID A RUNOFF. THE RESPECTIVE CAMPAIGN STYLES ARE NOW BEGINNING TO SHIFT TO ATTRACT THIS VOTE. ODUBER REMAINS THE CLEAR FRONTRUNNER, BUT WHAT WORRIES PLN STRATEGISTS IS THAT IF HE FAILS TO WIN IN FEBRUARY IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DO SO IN THE APRIL RUNOFF. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAN JO 04134 01 OF 02 231933Z

1. AS COSTA RICA MOVES UNENTHUSIASTICALLY

CLOSER TO ITS NATIONAL ELECTIONS ON FEBRUARY 3, THE ULTIMATE SIZE AND ELECTION PREFERENCE OF THE ESTIMATED 25-30 PERCENT OF UNDECIDED VOTERS IS CAUSING INCREASING CONCERN ON THE LEADING CANDIDATES. AS VOTING IS LEGALLY REQUIRED, THE MAJORITY OF THE UNDECIDEDS WILL GO TO THE POLLS DESPITE ANY DISINTEREST IN THE CANDIDATES. SOME SPECULATE THAT RATHER THAN DISINTEREST THE RELATEIVELY HIGH PERCENTAGE SHOWING UP AS "UNDECIDED" IN THE POLLS RELECTS INHERENT RETICENCE, PARTICULARLY BY CAMPESINOS, TO REVEAL THEIR CHOICE TO POLL-TAKERS WHO ARE MORE ACTIVE THIS YEAR THAN EVEN BEFORE. BUT GENERAL APATHY AND DISINTEREST IN THE ELECTORATE AT LARGE AND EVEN AMONG THE FAITHFUL IS INDISPUTABLE. THUS THE PROSPECT OF A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS, UNCOMMITTED (OR UNPREDICTABLE) UNTIL THEY STEP TO THE VOTING TABLE, CAUSES SHIVERS AMONG THE FRONTRUNNING CANDIDATES, WHO NEED A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE UNDECIDEDS ON TOP OF THEIR MACHINE VOTE IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE THE NECESSARY 40 PERCENT TO WIN THE PRESIDENCY AT THE FIRST ELECTION.

2. A SIZEABLE PORTION OF THOSE BEING POLLED AS UNDECIDED IS UNDER 30 YEARS OF AGE. THIS REFLECTS BOTH THE LOWERING MEDIAN AGE OF THE SOCIETY AND THE NEWLY (1971) ENFRANCHISED 18-YEAR OLDS. CONSEQUENTLY, MANY OF THE UNDECIDEDS HAVE NO RECOLLECTION OF THE POLARIZING EVENTS OF 1948; LITTLE EMOTIONAL FEELING FOR THE TWO TRADITIONAL AND OPPOSING POLITICAL LEADERS, PEPE FEGUERES AND DECEASED (1971) RAFAEL CALDERON GUARDIA; AND SHARE A CYNICAL VIEW OF TRADITIONAL POLITICS. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT A FAIR PERCENTAGE WILL NOT VOTE ALONG TRADITIONAL PARTY LINES AS THEIR FAMILIES DO OR WILL NOT BE CAUGHT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAN JO 04134 01 OF 02 231933Z

UP IN A LAST-MINUTE BANDWAGON MOMENTUM FOR AN APPARENT WINNER. HOWEVER, IF THE ELECTION WERE HELD TOMORROW, THE LEADING CANDIDATE, PARTIDO LIBERACION NACIONAL'S (PLN) DANIEL ODUBER WOULD NEED, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL INFORMAL POLITICAL PARTY POLLS, BETWEEN ONE-THIRD AND ONE-HALF OF THE UNDECIDEDS TO CROSS THE 40-

PERCENT MARK.

3. THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE RESPECTIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ARE BEGINNING TO SHARPEN AS THE FINAL TWO MONTHS APPROACH. THE SECOND RUNNER, DR. FERNANDO TREJOS ESCALANTE, CANDIDATE OF THE UNIFICACION NACIONAL (UN), HAS BEGUN TO ATTACK ODUBER'S CHARACTER AND THE PLN'S RECORD UNDER PRESIDENT FIGUERES. BUT HE HIMSELF HAS NOT CAUGHT FIRE NOR IMPRINTED A STRONG SENSE OF HIS LEADERSHIP ON HIS OWN PARTY CADRE. ODUBER IS ALSO GETTING ROUGH TREATMENT FROM TWO OTHER SECTORS. RODRIGO CARAZO, THE DISSIDENT PLN LEADER WHO FORMED HIS OWN OPPOSITION PARTY, THE PARTIDO RENOVACION DEMOCRATICA (PRD), AND IS NOW CHALLENGING FOR THE PRESIDENCY, HAS LAUNCHED A VIGOROUS PERSONAL ATTACK AGAINST ODUBER WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT HE IS AFRAID OF FACING TOUGH DECISIONS (THERE IS WIDELY ACCEPTED EVIDENCE SUBSTANTIATING THIS). MOREOVER, AS THE PRD'S PHILOSOPHY CLOSELY PARALLELS THE PLN'S, CARAZO HAS EMERGED AS A POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE TO PLN VOTERS DISSATISFIED WITH ODUBER AND FIGUERES. JORGE GONZALEZ MARTEN, FOUNDER OF THE PARTIDO NACIONAL INDEPENDIENTE (PNI) AND FORMER NATKDALIZED AMERICAN CITIZEN, HAS SATURATED THE MEDIA IN AN EXPENSIVE AND MYSTERIOUSLY FINANCED CAMPAIGN WHICH PRIMARILY HITS ODUBER AND TREJOS FOR BEING TRADITIONALISTS IN LEAGUE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH SUGGESTIONS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 SAN JO 04134 01 OF 02 231933Z

THAT THEY BOTH MEAN MORE INEFFICIENT AND DISHONEST GOVERNMENT FOR COSTA RICA. SINCE BOTH CARAZO AND GONZALEZ MARTEN HAVE A CERTAIN CHARISMA, THEY HAVE DISTRACTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION FROM THE FRONTRUNNERS AND THEREBY ADDED TO VOTER INDECISION. IF BOTH CAN MAINTAIN THEIR MOMENTUM THROUGH JANUARY, THEIR PRESENCE COULD KEEP ODUBER FROM REACHING THE 40 PERCENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAN JO 04134 02 OF 02 231939Z

64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 PC-04 DRC-01 /156 W

----- 067663

R 231750Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5599

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN JOSE 4134

4. STUNG BY THESE ATTACKS, THE PLN HAS COUNTERATTACKED, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CONTINUING ITS HIGH LEVEL, SOPHISTICATED EXPLANATION OF ODUBER'S PROGRAM FOR GOVERNMENT IN 1974-1978. ODUBER HAS NOW CHANGED HIS PROPAGANDA MANAGER FOR THE THIRD TIME, THIS TIME IN FAVOR OF THE MAN WHO RAN HIS LOSING CAMPAIGN IN 1966. HE HAS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT AFTER THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE HE WILL COME OUT SWINGING IN A TOUGH, PERSONALIST CAMPAIGN THROUGH THE FINAL MONTH IN AN EFFORT TO AROUSE ENTHUSIASM, PROJECT HIS PERSONAL IMAGE AND APPEAL TO THE COSTA RICAN ELECTORATE'S LIKING FOR THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGN. ODUBER ALSO HOPES THAT THE TRADITIONAL PULL OF PLN LOYALTIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, WILL SWING MANY OF THE UNDECIDEDS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, HELPED HOPEFULLY BY FIGUERES' OWN CHARISMA.

5. IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, THERE ARE FOUR MINOR ONES INCLUDING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAN JO 04134 02 OF 02 231939Z

THREE ON THE FAR LEFT: PARTIDO ACCION SOCIALISTA (PASO) WHICH HAS LONGTIME COSTA RICAN COMMUNIST LEADER MANUEL MORA RUNNING AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, THE PARTIDO SOCIALISTA, THE PARTIDO DEMOCRATA CRISTIANO, AND THE BRAND NEW PARTIDO DEMOCRATICA. ALL THESE PARTIES, BUT PRINCIPALLY PASO, WILL ACCOUNT FOR PERHAPS NV10-15 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HIGHER THAN IN THE PAST BECAUSE OF THE PROLIFERATION OF PARTIES AND POSSIBLY AN ACCUMULATED PROTEST VOTE.

6. THE OUTLOOK NOW IS FOR A CLOSE ELECTION WITH A POSSIBILITY THAT NO CANDIDATE WILL GAIN THE 40 PERCENT, THUS FOREGOING

A RUNOFF ELECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME IN COSTA RICAN HISTORY. ODUBER IS THE CLEAR FRONTRUNNER NOW AND WILL LIKELY REMAIN SO ON ELECTION DAY. WHAT WORRIES THE PLN STRATEGISTS IS THE AWARENESS THAT IF THEY DO NOT WIN 40 PERCENT THE FIRST TIME THEIR CHANCES ARE SLIM TO WIN THE RUNOFF IN APRIL. VAKY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION FORECASTS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANJO04134
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731116/aaaaalnv.tel
Line Count: 246
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SEVENTY-FIVE DAYS TO THE ELECTION BEGIN SUMMARY: THE COSTA RICAN ELECTION PICTURE
TAGS: PINT, CS, (ODUBER, DANIEL), (ESCLANTE, FERNANDO TREJOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005